

Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting

Improving Places Select Commission – 29 June 2021

Report Title

Tenant Scrutiny Panel Review – Aids and Adaptations Service

Is this a Key Decision and has it been included on the Forward Plan?

No, but it has been included on the Forward Plan

Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report

Anne Marie Lubanski, Strategic Director of Adult Care, Housing and Public Health

Report Author(s)

Jordan Hatswell, Adaptations, Furnished Homes & Temporary Accommodation Manager

jordan.hatswell@rotherham.gov.uk

Ward(s) Affected

Borough-Wide

Report Summary

The Tenant Scrutiny Panel selected the Aids and Adaptations Service as an area of service for review, as part of a continuous programme of service reviews which are undertaken by the Panel. The work of the Panel is facilitated and supported by Rotherfed, the Council's Tenant Federation provider. The aim of the Panel was to investigate the customer journey for those using the Aids and Adaptations service in terms of accessibility, clarity and fairness.

The Tenant Scrutiny Panel has completed its review and has submitted a report detailing the Panel's findings, together with recommendations for service improvement. The report is attached as Appendix 1. The scrutiny review recommendations are summarised within the service action plan at Appendix 2.

Recommendations

- 1.1 Note the Tenant Scrutiny Panel Report and recommendations.
- 1.2 Note the progress made to date within the Action Plan.
- 1.3 Agree to receive a further report in 12 months' time

List of Appendices Included

- Appendix 1 Tenant Scrutiny Panel Report A&A Scrutiny Action Plan RAG
- Appendix 2 Tenant Scrutiny Panel recommendations and service action plan
- Appendix 3 The Climate Impact Assessment

Background Papers

None

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel

None

Council Approval Required

No

Exempt from the Press and Public

No

Tenant Scrutiny Panel Review – Aids and Adaptations Service

1. Background

- 1.1 In April 2019 the Aids and Adaptations Service was selected by the Tenant Scrutiny Panel for review, following consideration of the Council's housing service performance outturn for 2018/19.
- 1.2 The performance data relating to the Aids and Adaptations Service showed that service performance for adaptation works completed on time had improved on the previous year, at 96.16%, compared to 94.29% 2017/18. However, the target for 2018/19 of 98% had not been achieved. In considering this area of service for review, the Panel also reflected upon their own experiences of the service and anecdotal evidence they had received from conversations with other tenants.
- 1.3 The Panel set out several objectives for the review, which are summarised below:
 - Review and consider the adaptations customer journey, including accessing the service, time taken, and the number of different services involved.
 - Ascertain whether the publicity around the service is available to all tenants, including hard to reach groups.
 - Use mystery shopping and other methods to explore service access routes.
 - Consider the current service policy in terms of accessibility for tenants.
 - Benchmark against other housing providers to identify any learning and good practice from their systems and policies.
 - Examine the charging policy and how clear it is.
 - Explore links between adaptations and different services e.g. NHS, Occupational Therapists and Assistive Technology
 - Ascertain how service requests are prioritised.
- 1.4 In taking forward the review, Tenant Scrutiny Panel members interviewed representatives of the relevant services. This included senior managers from the Council's Housing Options Service, which administers the aids and adaptations service; staff within the adaptations service and within the Community Occupational Therapy Service (NHS Foundation Trust). The Panel also collected relevant data, using several methods, to inform the review and final report. These methods included a mystery shopping exercise via a telephone survey of 22 tenants, who had recent experience of the major adaptations process or were currently journeying through the process.

- 1.5 Panel members also contacted the Council via various customer access routes, to enquire about adaptations for a friend or family member, via email, telephone and face to face contact.
- 1.6 Finally, a benchmarking exercise was completed by comparing the Council's Aids and Adaptations Service against other similar housing providers and through the Northern Adaptations Group.
- 1.7 The report submitted by the Panel summarised the findings of the review, including the evidence base used to inform the Panel's recommendations to improve the service. Aspects of the service reflected upon included how tenants are informed of their choices regarding adaptations; customer expectations when utilising the service and the communication customers receive whilst works are on-going to the point of completion. A further consideration was the collection of customer satisfaction data and how it is utilised to inform service development and improvement.
- 1.8 The Council received the report at the Housing Service Senior Management Team meeting on 3rd March 2021. The report was very much welcomed, and the recommendations considered and agreed. An action plan was developed by the service in response to the recommendations and implemented.

2 Key Issues

- 2.1 The action plan and progress to date is detailed at Appendix 2. The updated action plan shows that all the submitted recommendations are being implemented, with several actions already completed. This includes improvements to budget monitoring and control, as well as resource management for time critical works for customers in urgent need.
- 2.2 The good progress already being made demonstrates the value the Council places upon the Tenant Scrutiny Review framework and ensuring that the customers voice is clearly heard in how we shape, deliver and continually improve services.
- 2.3 This scrutiny review also contributes towards the following priorities:

The Council Plan:

- Every child making the best start in life
- Every adult secure, responsible, and empowered
- A strong community in a clean, safe environment
- Extending opportunity, prosperity and planning for the future.

The Housing Strategy:

- Strengthening Places
- Improving Health
- Working Together

3 Options considered and recommended proposal

- 3.1 The recommendations arising from the Tenant Scrutiny Review are detailed within the action plan at Appendix 2.

4 Consultation on proposal

- 4.1 The Tenant Scrutiny Review report and recommendations were presented to the Rotherfed Tenant Scrutiny Meeting on 8th February 2021 for discussion and finalisation, prior to submission to the Council. The Report was received, discussed and the findings and recommendations accepted at the Housing Senior Management Team meeting on 3rd March 2021.

5 Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

- 6.1 Delivery against the recommendations in the action plan is being monitored by the Tenant Scrutiny Panel in liaison with the Council's Aids and Adaptations Service Management Team. The projected completion dates for actions within the plan are reflective of current resources within the service and recognises that the service is on a continuing journey of improvement.
- 6.2 The overall accountable officer is Tom Bell, Assistant Director for Housing.

6 Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications (to be written by the relevant Head of Finance and the Head of Procurement on behalf of s151 Officer)

- 6.1 None arising from progress report

7 Legal Advice and Implications (to be written by Legal Officer on behalf of Assistant Director Legal Services)

- 7.1 None arising from progress report

8 Human Resources Advice and Implications

- 8.1 At DLT on 11 May 2021 four full time additional posts for the service were approved for 12 months on a temporary basis. One project manager, two application officers and one technical officer.
- 8.2 The cost of these posts will be a pressure on HRA (£78K) and General Fund (£64K) budgets. This additional cost is to be funded by the additional fees generated by the completion of carried forward works which has been allocated an appropriate budget. There is a risk that if not enough additional works are completed then that will result in a budget pressure on both HRA and General Fund.
- 8.3 There are no other financial implications resulting from the report.

9 Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

9.1 None arising from progress report

10 Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications

10.1 Ensuring that the customer voice is heard is instrumental in how the Council develops and delivers its services and is of paramount importance. The review supports the continued journey of improvement for the aids and adaptations service. The service aims to offer a high quality and accessible service to all customers, ensuring that our residents can live with dignity and independence.

11 Implications for CO₂ Emissions and Climate Change

11.1 The service improvement actions being implemented will contribute to the Council's ambition to become carbon neutral by 2030. The improvements proposed to customer access and self-service opportunities will reduce the potential number of physical visits Council officers will make to complete all paperwork and assessments, by offering a digital solution. The creation of this digital service will reduce paper and printing requirements of the service as well as reducing multiple visits to customers where possible, reducing the services carbon emissions through reduced car usage.

11.2 The Contractor Partners operate to the minimum Standards Charter to:

- Eliminate unnecessary waste by adopting the “reduce, reuse, recycle” philosophy.
- Be a good neighbour, minimise negative local impacts (noise, air quality etc.), improve green areas (e.g. biodiversity, visual attractiveness etc.).
- Reduce carbon footprint – be aware of main impacts on carbon emissions including the indirect carbon used in manufacturing processes and the direct impact of operations and logistics

11.2 Temporary ramps and straight stairlifts are recycled following removal and all new shower installations are energy efficient.

11.3 Please see the Emissions Impact Assessment attached at Appendix 3

12 Implications for Partners

12.1 The Housing Options Service Senior Management Team will continue to work with RotherFed and the Tenant Scrutiny Panel towards delivering the recommendations in the action plan. Delivery of these recommendations will involve collaboration across relevant council services and with key delivery partners.

13 Risks and Mitigation

13.1 The key risk is the failure to engage with the tenant scrutiny board in Rotherfed and inability to deliver against the recommendations in the action plan. This will be mitigated by ongoing monitoring, scrutiny and evaluation of the recommendations by the Improving Places Select Commission and the Adaptations / Housing Options Management Team.

14 Accountable Officer(s)

Approvals obtained on behalf of:-

	Named Officer	Date
Chief Executive		Click here to enter a date.
Strategic Director of Finance & Customer Services (S.151 Officer)	Mark Scarrott	10/06/21
Assistant Director of Legal Services (Monitoring Officer)	Elizabeth Anderton	10/06/21
Assistant Director of Human Resources (if appropriate)		09/06/21
Head of Human Resources (if appropriate)	Trish Law	09/06/21

Report Author: Jordan Hatswell, Adaptations, Furnished Homes & Temporary Accommodation Manager. jordan.hatswell@rotherham.gov.uk

This report is published on the Council's [website](#).